

U.S.S.N. 09/465,436
Group Art Unit: 2172

REMARKS

In this Response, Applicants amend claims 12 and 22, cancel claims 6-11, 14, 17-21, 24, and 27-28 without prejudice, and traverse the Examiner's rejections of all pending claims. Silence with regard to any of the Examiner's rejections should not be construed as acquiescence to any of the rejections. Specifically, silence with regard to any of the rejections of the dependent claims that depend from an independent claim considered by Applicants to be allowable based on the Amendment and/or Remarks provided herein should not be construed as acquiescence to any of the rejections. Rather, silence should be construed as recognition by the Applicants that the previously lodged rejections are moot based on the Amendments and/or Remarks submitted by the Applicants relative to the independent claim from which the dependent claims depend. Applicants reserve the option to further prosecute the same or similar claims in the instant or a subsequent application. Upon entry of the Amendment, claims 1-5, 12-13, 15-16, 22-23, and 25-26 are pending in the instant application. The issues of the July 27, 2004 Office Action are presented below with reference to the Office Action.

With reference to the Office Action, paragraphs 1-2: Applicants thank the Examiner for the reopening of prosecution, and the withdrawal of the finality of the last Office Action.

With reference to the Office Action, paragraph 3: Applicants thank the Examiner for the finding of allowability of pending claims 1-5.

With reference to the Office Action, paragraphs 4-7: Applicants thank the Examiner for the finding of allowable subject matter in claims 14 and 24. Solely in the interest of expediting prosecution of the allowed claims, Applicants incorporate the allowable subject matter of allowable claims 14 and 24 into independent claims 12 and 22, thereby traversing the Examiner's rejections of independent claims 12 and 22, and making independent claims 12 and 22 allowable. For the Examiner's convenience, Applicants cancel claims 14 and 24 using strikethrough to allow the Examiner to see the incorporation of the allowable subject matter as provided herein.

Because independent claims 12 and 22 are allowable, claims 13, 15-16, 23, and 25-26, which depend from one of allowable independent claims 12 or 22, are also allowable, and Applicants thus traverse the Examiner's rejections of the same.

U.S.S.N. 09/465,436
Group Art Unit: 2172

Solely in the interest of expediting prosecution, Applicants cancel, without prejudice, claims 6-11, 17-24, and 27-28, thereby mooted the Examiner's rejections thereof. Applicants reserve the right to file, and will file a continuation application seeking allowance of the aforementioned claims.

U.S.S.N. 09/465,436
Group Art Unit: 2172

CONCLUSION

Applicants consider the Response herein to be fully responsive to the Office Action. Based on the foregoing Amendment and Remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants request allowance. Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the Applicants' undersigned Attorney if any issues are deemed to remain prior to allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,
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